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Items for information: health statistics

Intersecretariat Working Group on Health Statistics

Note by the Secretary-General

In accordance with a request of the Statistical Commission at its thirty-eighth session,** the Secretary-General has the honour to transmit the report of the Intersecretariat Working Group on Health Statistics. The report, which is presented to the Commission for information, describes and identifies projects in the area of health statistics, which are of interest to national statistical offices. It also includes work under development by the Health Metric Network on health surveys. The detailed report of the meeting of the Working Group will be circulated at the thirty-ninth session of the Commission as a background document. The Commission may wish to take note of the report.

* E/CN.3/2008/1.

** See *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 2007, Supplement No. 4* (E/2007/24), chap. I.A.

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Report of the Intersecretariat Working Group on Health Statistics

1. At its meeting in November 2006, the Intersecretariat Working Group on Health Statistics tasked a small group with developing a workplan for the Group. Consultations between the chair of the Intersecretariat Working Group and the World Health Organization (WHO), the Statistical Commission and the Health Metrics Network identified areas that could be presented to country representatives of the national statistical offices for their evaluation. A meeting to discuss these issues has been scheduled for 17 and 18 December 2007. Up to 10 country representatives are scheduled to attend. Of particular interest are the progress that has been made in advocating for civil registration systems and other forms of vital registration and a recent meeting hosted by the WHO/Health Metrics Network in July 2007 on health surveys.

2. The agenda of the December 2007 meeting will focus on the interest and role of national statistical offices in the further development of the following two areas:

(a) Collaboration to improve vital registration: the Health Metrics Network, in close collaboration with the United Nations Statistics Division, WHO and a number of other partners published a series of four papers in *The Lancet*, a leading medical journal, entitled "Who counts?" on vital registration. The papers describe the current situation in countries and outline ways to improve civil registration. The Intersecretariat Working Group intends to further discuss these issues and explore ways in which health and statistics can work together to improve vital registration in countries;

(b) Collaboration in conducting health surveys: the interest and role of national statistical offices and the Intersecretariat Working Group in health surveys and the evaluation of interactions between national statistical offices and international organizations (including funders) and ministries of health in the area of health surveys.

3. Specific topics include:

(a) National statistical office interest in endorsing the concept of a standard survey composed of modules that can be added or deleted based on need;

(b) Potential modalities for health surveys and past experience with the modalities;

(c) Interest in institutionalizing regular health surveys and/or including health survey components in economic surveys;

(d) Interest in disease- or problem-specific modules versus general health status modules;

(e) National statistical office involvement in civil registration, vital rates and cause-of-death statistics challenges;

(f) Current capacity for analysing health survey data;

(g) Issues related to institutional capacity and institutional relationships.

4. The potential role of the Intersecretariat Working Group in each of the above topics will be discussed. The discussions will serve to develop a workplan and an

operational structure for the Group. The report of the meeting will be available as a conference room paper.

5. The Commission may wish to take note of the report by the Intersecretariat Working Group on Health Statistics.